CLAIMS

1. A method for providing information and services of a collaboration system that allows a plurality of members to interact collaboratively in a shared folder in a folder-based file system that is part of an operating system with a user interface, comprising:
   (a) including a collaborative interface in the operating system user interface;
   (b) using the collaborative interface to display information regarding the members collaborating within the context of a shared folder, through the use of the collaborative system;
   (c) determining changes made in the folder-based file system; and
   (d) communicating the changes to other members via the collaborative system.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein step (a) comprises designing and implementing a portion of the user interface as the collaborative interface.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein step (a) comprises enhancing the user interface to include the collaborative interface.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein step (a) comprises replacing a portion of the user interface with the collaborative interface.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein step (b) comprises using the collaborative interface to create a shared space underlying the operating system shared folder within which collaboration will occur.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein step (b) further comprises using the collaborative interface to invite one of the plurality of members to join the shared space.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein step (b) comprises displaying information regarding members in the shared space.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the information regarding members in the shared space includes awareness information that indicates whether each member is on-line and available.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein step (c) comprises, for each synchronized file in the folder-based file system, maintaining a snapshot that contains sufficient information to allow a determination to be made whether that file has changed.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein step (c) further comprises receiving a notification from the folder-based file system that changes have been made to the folder-based file system and in response to the notification, examining each file snapshot to determine which file has changed.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein step (c) comprises connecting to the collaborative system via a web services interface.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein step (d) comprises maintaining a list of members who are in the shared folder.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein step (d) further comprises for each member who is in the shared folder, maintaining information indicating whether that member has contents of each synchronized file in the shared folder.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising providing a stub file to each shared folder member who does not have the contents of a synchronized file.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising displaying the stub file in the user interface.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising downloading file contents from a source when a user selects the stub file display.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the source comprises a server.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein the source comprises a computer of another member.

19. The method of claim 1 further comprising using the collaborative system to disseminate file changes to members in the shared folder.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the file changes are disseminated only as compressed representations of such changes, such as binary differences, rather than the entire file contents.

21. The method of claim 1 wherein step (b) comprises using the collaborative interface to create a shared space underlying the operating system shared folder within which collaboration will occur and wherein the method further comprises:

(e) forwarding a change made in the shared space to a file to a document share engine in the shared space; and

(f) using the document share engine to make the file change to a corresponding file in the folder-based file system.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein step (f) comprises using a file synchronizer in the collaborative system that makes the change in the folder based file system under control of the document share engine.

23. The method of claim 21 further comprising:

(g) using the document share engine to notify each of the plurality of members that a file change has occurred.

24. The method of claim 21 further comprising:

(h) using the document share engine to display in the collaborative interface a list of the plurality of members and an indicator showing which of the plurality of members has opened a selected synchronized file.

25. The method of claim 1 wherein the collaborative interface comprises an on-line chat mechanism.

26. The method of claim 1 wherein the collaborative interface comprises a mechanism for creating and storing comments related to a selected file.

27. Apparatus for providing information and services of a collaboration system that allows a plurality of members to interact collaboratively in a shared folder in a folder-based file system that is part of an operating system with a user interface, comprising:

means for including a collaborative interface in the user interface;

an interface that connects the collaborative interface to the collaboration system in order to retrieve and display information regarding the members in the user interface;

a file synchronizer that determines a change made in the folder-based file system; and

a document share engine that communicates the change to the collaborative system.

28. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for including the collaborative interface comprises means for designing and implementing a portion of the user interface as the collaborative interface.

29. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for including the collaborative interface comprises means for enhancing the user interface to include the collaborative interface.

30. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for including the collaborative interface comprises means for replacing a portion of the user interface with an interface specifically intended to support collaborative activity.

31. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the interface comprises a web services interface that allows the collaborative interface to interact with the collaboration system to create a shared space.

32. The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the interface further comprises a web services interface that allows the collaborative interface to interact with the collaboration system to invite one of the plurality of members to join the shared space.

33. The apparatus of claim 32 wherein the collaborative interface comprises means for displaying information regarding members in the shared space.

34. The apparatus of claim 33 wherein the information regarding members in the shared space includes awareness information that indicates whether each member is on-line and available.

35. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the file synchronizer comprises means for maintaining for each synchronized file in the folder-based file system a snapshot that contains sufficient information to allow a determination to be made whether that file has changed.

36. The apparatus of claim 35 wherein the file synchronizer further comprises a file RAMP that receives a notification from the folder-based file system that changes have been made to the folder-based file system and means responsive to the notification for examining each file snapshot to determine which file has changed.

37. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the file synchronizer comprises a web services interface that connects to the collaboration system.

38. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the interface comprises a web services interface that allows the collaborative interface to interact with the collaboration system to create a shared space and wherein the document share engine comprises means for maintaining a list of members who are in the shared space.

39. The apparatus of claim 38 wherein the document share engine further comprises means for maintaining for each member who is in the shared space information

indicating whether that member has contents of each synchronized file in the shared space.

40. The apparatus of claim 39 further comprising means for creating a stub file and providing the stub file to each shared space member who does not have the contents of a synchronized file.

41. The apparatus of claim 40 further comprising means for displaying the stub file in the user interface.

42. The apparatus of claim 41 further comprising means for downloading file contents from a source when a user selects the stub file display.

43. The apparatus of claim 42 wherein the source comprises a server.

44. The apparatus of claim 42 wherein the source comprises a computer of another member.

45. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the document share engine comprises means for determining changes in a file and means for providing that changes to the collaboration system so that the changes are distributed to members in the shared folder.

46. The apparatus of claim 45 wherein the document share engine provides the file changes to the collaboration system as binary differences.

47. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the interface comprises a web services interface that allows the collaborative interface to interact with the collaboration

system to create a shared space and wherein the document share engine is located in the shared space and the document share engine further comprises means for receiving a change made in the shared space to a file; and means for communicating the change to the file synchronizer.

48. The apparatus of claim 47 wherein the file synchronizer comprises means for making the change in the folder based file system.

49. The apparatus of claim 47 wherein the document share engine comprises means for notifying each of the plurality of members that a file change has occurred.

50. The apparatus of claim 47 further comprising means cooperating with the document share engine and comprising means for displaying in the collaborative interface a list of the plurality of members and an indicator showing which of the plurality of members has opened a selected synchronized file.

51. The apparatus of claim 27 further comprising an on-line chat mechanism in the document share engine controlled by the collaborative interface.

52. The apparatus of claim 27 further comprises means controlled by the collaborative interface for creating and storing comments related to a selected file.

53. A computer program product for providing information and services of a collaboration system that allows a plurality of members to interact collaboratively in a shared folder in a folder-based file system that is part of an operating system with a user interface, the computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code thereon, including:

program code for including a collaborative interface in the user interface;

program code for using the collaborative interface to display information regarding the members collaborating within the context of the shared folder, through the use of the collaborative system;

program code for determining a change made in the folder-based file system; and

program code for communicating the changes to other members via the collaborative system.

54. A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave for providing information and services of a collaboration system that allows a plurality of members to interact collaboratively in a shared folder in a folder-based file system that is part of an operating system with a user interface, the computer data signal comprising:

program code for including a collaborative interface in the user interface;

program code for using the collaborative interface to display information regarding the members collaborating within the context of the shared folder, through the use of the collaborative system;

program code for determining a change made in the folder-based file system; and

program code for communicating the changes to other members via the collaborative system.